AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-5. (canceled).

6.   (Currently Amended) A~~The~~ communication connection merge method as set forth in ~~claim 4~~ claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are label switched paths,~~connection is a label switched path~~ and said node is a label switching router.

7.   (Currently Amended) A~~The~~ communication connection merge method as set forth in ~~claim 4~~ claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said communication ~~connection~~ connections are virtual channels,~~is a virtual channel~~ and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

Claims 8-14. (canceled).

15.   (Currently Amended) A node which consolidates ~~performing merge process for consolidating a plurality of~~ communication connections having different destination nodes ~~in~~connection of a connection-oriented network ~~at a node on the way of transfer route into a common communication connection~~, comprising:

       a processor which determines~~means for making judgment~~ whether a tunneling communication connection is present both in a first route of an~~section where said~~ existing communication connection and in a second route of a second~~said new~~ communication

connection ~~have a common transfer route upon merging new communication connection on setting for existing communication connection~~;

wherein said processor modifies a ~~means for modifying collateral~~ parameter of said tunneling communication connection to accommodate merging said second~~merge the new communication connection for enabling accommodation of the new~~ communication connection in said tunneling communication connection; and

~~means for performing merge~~ wherein said processor merges said existing communication connection and said second~~new~~ communication connection on said tunneling communication connection ~~in a condition to be branched at a terminal point node after modification of parameter of the existing communication connection~~.

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16.   (Currently Amended) The~~A~~ node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said existing communications connection is a tunneling communication connection ~~recursively repeats merge upper level tunneling communication connection to lower level tunneling communication connection for an arbitrary times in a condition capable of branching at the terminal node~~.

17.   (Currently Amended) The~~A~~ node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are ~~connection is a~~ label switched paths,~~path~~ and said node is a label switching router.

18.   (Currently Amended) The~~A~~ node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said communication connection is a virtual channel and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

19.   (Currently Amended) The~~A~~ node of claim 15, wherein said processor ~~performing merge process for consolidating a plurality of communication connection of a connection-oriented network at a node on the way of transfer route into a common communication connection, comprising:~~

        ~~means for newly setting~~creates a tunneling communication connection capable of accommodating ~~collateral parameter of~~ said existing communication connection, wherein said tunneling communication connection is in said first route and said second route ~~and said new communication connection in a section where said existing communication connection and said new communication connection have a common transfer route upon merging new communication connection on setting for existing communication connection; and~~

        ~~means for performing merge said existing communication connection and said new communication connection on said tunneling communication connection in a condition to be branched at a terminal point node.~~

Claims 20-22. (canceled).

23.   (New) The node of claim 19, wherein said second communications connection is a new communication connection.

24.   (New) A communication merge method in a connection-oriented network which consolidates an existing communication connection having a first route to a first destination node with a second communication connection having a second route to a second destination node, wherein said first and second destination nodes are different, comprising:

> determining whether a tunneling communication connection is present from a third
>> node to a fourth node, wherein said third and fourth nodes are in both said
>> first route and said second route;

> modifying a parameter of said tunneling communication connection to
>> accommodate a merger of said communication connections, if said tunneling
>> communication connection is present; and

> merging said communication connections on said tunneling communication
>> connection.

25.   (New) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said existing communications connection is a tunneling communication connection.

26.   (New) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

> creating a new tunneling communication connection from a fifth node to a sixth
>> node, wherein said fifth and sixth nodes are in said first route and second
>> ~~route, if said tunneling communication connection is not present.~~

27.   (New) The communication merge method of claim 26, wherein said second communication connection is a new communication connection.

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